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Lake budget director might take job with auditor

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Lake County commissioners might need to look for a person to oversee one of the most key components of their office — managing the county's \$54.83 million budget.

County Budget Director Michael T. Matas indicated last week to commissioners that he would leave the position at the end of the month to take over as county Auditor Edward H. Zupancic's chief deputy.

At least two commissioners are upset with Zupancic for offer-

ing Matas the job.

The position in the Auditor's Office became available after Joe Dowd, the current chief deputy auditor, told Zupancic he would retire effective at the end of June.

Zupancic confirmed Wednesday that Matas was offered that

job in his office.

"Joe informed me that he was retiring at the end of June and I offered Mike the position at the end of June and he accepted," he said.

However, Matas had not formally resigned from the

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position as of Wednesday afternoon and it's possible he will not. Matas did not respond to requests for comment.

Regardless, commissioners placed advertisements seeking résumés for qualified candidates for the position of budget finance director. The ad appeared Sunday in The News-Herald and other publications.

Matas is the key player for the commissioners to determine the annual funding allotments for county departments. Commissioners approve those allotments as part of the county's overall annual budget.

He was hired more than five years ago when commissioners passed a resolution. Commissioners would need to do the same to release him from the position.

Commissioner Daniel P. Troy is not happy with Matas' decision and does not want him to leave. He's also not happy that Zupancic offered Matas a job.

"I've got a lot of problems with this," Troy said. "It's highly unprofessional, highly classless to make an offer to a key person in our operation especially in this critical period."

Commissioners are looking at the possibility of losing \$2 million in funding from the state budget that goes into effect July 1. Matas would play a key role in determining how those cuts would affect county departments for the rest of the year.

Troy said county departments and elected officials have had to trim their operations this year as much as possible because of budget constraints and often don't replace staff after they leave their position in an effort to save money.

He questioned why Zupancic couldn't absorb the loss of his chief deputy.

"After 25 years, the auditor could learn how to do most of the stuff down there to do that job," Troy said.

Zupancic said he was aware of the criticism by Troy, and declined to comment on the

matter.

"I'm aware of that," Zupancic said. "I'm not going to discuss it publicly."

Commissioner Robert E. Aufuldish said the timing is poor and he is upset that Zupancic didn't approach the commissioners to ask if they could talk with Matas about the pending vacancy in his office.

"We're dismayed the auditor would do something to us without saying anything or requesting if he could talk to Mike to see if he'd be interested," Aufuldish said. "It takes a while to figure out what is happening in this job. The learning curve is very, very long and complicated."

Commissioner Raymond E. Sines said it is possible that Matas could leave the commissioners' office, but he said it might open a new possibility.

"What we're looking at is if there is a possibility for him to not only oversee the budgeting of the commissioners' office and hire someone to do the day-to-day stuff and also oversee the auditor's office," Sines said.

He said the development could provide an opportunity for both county departments to save money.

"We're trying to work through some of these opportunities to use his talents a couple ways in the county. Hopefully we can do that," Sines said. "I don't think we're on a hard schedule."

Troy would like for Matas to continue in his current position and he isn't keen on him working for two departments.

"I think I have an outstanding budget director and no desire to look for another one," Troy said. "Unfortunately I can't stop him from leaving or from the auditor hiring him."

Aufuldish would like for Matas to stay, but he doesn't think he will change his mind after speaking with him.

"He was obviously upset that he had to make that decision," Aufuldish said. "But he seemed to think he would like (working as chief deputy auditor) better than being the finance director of the county."